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STATE FOR NEA/MAG (HARRIS AND HOPKINS)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/06/2018
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [TS](#)
SUBJECT: ENGAGING THE AMU: TUNISIAN ATTENDANCE AT TECHNICAL
EXPERTS' MEETING

REF: A. STATE 28586
[1](#)B. STATE 21604

Classified By: Ambassador Robert F. Godec for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) On April 5, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a diplomatic note confirming that Mokhtar Chaouachi, MFA Director General for International Organizations and Conferences, and Tahar Refai, Ministry of Interior Director General for International Cooperation, will attend the April 9 AMU meeting on youth deradicalization in Washington.

[1](#)2. (C) BIO NOTES: Refai, who often goes by the name Tahar Fellous, is well known to the Embassy, having held his position for a number of years. In June 2007, he made a presentation on extremist fatwas before a special meeting of the Arab League Council of Interior Ministers on the rising terrorist threat. At the time, Refai told PolOff that Tunisia believes existing religious texts are sufficiently clear to combat terrorism. He explained that Tunisia has a three-pronged approach to combating extremism: controlling religious speech (sermons), imams, and mosques (all of which are supervised and monitored by the GOT.) Refai can be friendly and gregarious, or curt and standoffish, depending on the circumstances and his mood. He appears to enjoy good relations with the Minister of Interior and understands some English.

[1](#)3. (C) Chaouachi, who was appointed in 2006, is not known to EmbOffs, despite several attempts to meet with him. We recommend that the Department use his presence as an opportunity to express USG disappointment that he has never agreed to an appointment request from Embassy personnel.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/tunis/index.cfm>
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